

Darwin D. Martin House  
125 Jewett Parkway  
Buffalo  
Erie County  
New York

HABS No. NY-5611

HABS  
NY

15-BUF

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

ADDENDUM  
FOLLOWS ...

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240



## HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. NY-5611

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## DARWIN D. MARTIN HOUSE

Location: 125 Jewett Parkway, Buffalo, Erie County, New York

Present Owner: State University of New York at Buffalo

Present Occupant: Alumni Association and University Archives

Present Use: Offices, meeting rooms, and manuscript repository.

Statement of Significance: This Prairie house designed by Frank Lloyd Wright in 1904, is important in the development of a large, private residence which contains open and versatile interior spaces. This concept of a single-family dwelling was not prevalent in American domestic architecture until thirty years later. The house was designated a Buffalo and Erie County Historical Site, November 16, 1971.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

## A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1904.
2. Architect: Frank Lloyd Wright.
3. Original and subsequent owners:
  - 1904-37 From the time the house was constructed until Mrs. Martin left, the house was occupied by the Martin family.
  - 1937-46 Although the Martin heirs still retained ownership, the house remained vacant and exposed to considerable vandalism.
  - 1946 The City of Buffalo acquired the house for payment of back taxes. At this time it was reported that Darwin R. Martin (son) also received \$394.53 for the house. This report is refuted by Dorothy Martin Foster, daughter of Darwin D. Martin.
  - Early 1950s The City of Buffalo sold the property to Sebastian J. Tauriello.
  - 1967 The State University of New York at Buffalo purchased the house from Tauriello's widow, for use as the president's residence.



4. Builder or contractor, suppliers: Contractor: O. S. Lang; plumbing and heating system: Foster and Glidden; masonry: Pierson Sefton Co., Jersey City, N. J. During construction, fifty men worked for ten hours, six days per week for two years. They were paid \$2 per day.
5. Original plans: The Frank Lloyd Wright Collection of the University Archives, State University of New York at Buffalo, contains many dated and undated blueprints of the original drawings, several original drawings, watercolors, and tracings. The following catalog entries and descriptions note the entire collection given by Darwin R. Martin and Dorothy Martin Foster.

Entries 1-31 refer to the Darwin D. Martin house, Jewett Parkway, Buffalo, N. Y.

- 1 Undated blueprints on boards, signed by Wright, eight sheets: basement, first floor, second floor, north and south elevations, east and west elevations, sections, frame details, second-story frames.
- 2 Undated blueprints, signed by Wright, six sheets: basement, first floor, second floor, north and south elevations, east and west elevations, sections.
- 3 May 15, 1905, revised blue print #11, signed by Wright, section on line A-B and B-C.
- 4 June, 1916, drawing and watercolor of exterior, signed by Wright, original pencil tracings with color of first floor, second floor, and conservatories.
- 5 March 10, 1920, blueprints, signed by Andrew Willatzen, architect, Seattle, two sheets: alterations to first floor and sections, alterations to second floor.
- 6 Undated photocopies of drawings of original plans of first and second floors by S. J. Tauriello, architect and owner of house; three sheets of tracing paper drawings of alterations to basement, first floor, and second floor by Tauriello.
- 7 1967, photocopies of alterations by Edgar Tafel, five sheets: basement, first floor, second floor, family and commercial kitchen, laundry room on second floor.
- 8 Undated tracings on Japanese paper, signed by Wright, six sheets: first-floor furniture arrangement, dining-room table and chairs, library table, living-room furniture, bedroom furniture, bedroom furniture.
- 9 Undated photograph of living-room fireplace mosaic.
- 10 Undated blueprint signed by Wright, details of a skylight, location not specified.
- 11 Undated tracing in pencil, signed by Wright, details of fireplace.
- 12 February 28, ?, unsigned blueprint, detail of outside at light units.
- 13 March 3, 1905, blueprint, signed by Wright, basement with verified plans of electric work.



- 14 Undated and unsigned plan of foundations on sized linen.
- 15 Undated plan of plumbing and heating systems by Foster and Glidden.
- 16 December 5, 1904, pencil tracing of stone sill, cement walk, and wall section by Pierson Sefton Co., Jersey City, N. J.
- 17 December 5, 1904, blueprint of greenhouse mason plan by Pierson Sefton Co.
- 18 December 14, 1904, blueprint of greenhouse bench plan, by Pierson Sefton Co.
- 19 May 7, 1904, June 1, 1904; revised, October 8, 1904, lights added, blueprints of barn and conservatories, signed by Wright, seven sheets: basement and foundation, first floor, second floor, north and south elevations, east and west elevations, details, sections.
- 20 Undated red and black drawing on sized line, signed by Wright, plan for new skylights in conservatory.
- 21 February 15, 1905, original linen-backed tracing and blueprint of plantings for grounds, signed by Wright.
- 22 Undated blueprint of grounds with plan of floral arrangement or Floricycle, signed by Wright.
- 23 October 15, 1910, blueprint of grounds by Walter Burley Griffen, Landscape Architect.
- 24 Undated blueprint of grounds with details of plantings by Johnson Elliott, Landscape Architect, Pittsburgh, Pa.
- 25 November 23, 1905, blueprints of gardener's cottage, signed by Wright, four sheets: floor plans, elevations, revised floor plans, details.
- 26 November 29, 1905, revised May, 1908, blueprints of gardener's cottage, signed by Wright, three sheets; floor plans, elevations, details.
- 27 October 3, 1903, plot map by H. T. Buttolph, Surveyor, two sheets: black ink on paper plot map of corner of Jewett Parkway and Summit Avenue, map on parchment of same plot with plan for house sketched in pencil.
- 28 April 18, 1905, blueprint of plot by O. S. Lang.
- 29 September 4, 1918, blueprint of plot map of corner of Jewett Parkway and Woodward Avenue by Frederick K. King, Engineer.
- 30 June 5, 1961, June 28, revised, February 1, 1963, re-surveyed, photocopy of map of plot, corner of Jewett Parkway and Summit Avenue by Krehbiel and Krehbiel, Engineers.
- 31 1905-06, Contractor's Letterbook, 290 pages, O. S. Lang.

Other catalog entries are concerned with the Frank Lloyd Wright drawings for the Martin lakeshore house, "Gray-cliff," dated August 19, 1929. The final entry contains the complete plans of the Larkin Building, designed by Wright in 1904. One reel of microfilm and eighteen



photocopies enlarged to the original size from the film includes floor plans, sections, heating and ventilation and telephone cable systems. The original plans were loaned for filming by the Larkin family in 1971.

6. Alterations and additions: The Archives of the State University of New York at Buffalo does have two sets of alteration plans. (See catalog entries 4 and 5.) To what extent any of these plans were carried out is unknown. The alterations recorded in entry 6, created two apartments, owner's residence, and a basement office. The conservatory and garage were demolished by Tauriello in 1960. An apartment complex was erected on this portion of the property. All alterations and restoration of 1967 by Edgar Tafel--a former student of Wright's at Taliesin Foundation--are recorded in entry 7 of the catalog.

Several stained-glass windows designed by Wright for the Martin House were among the twenty-four sold at the Richard Feigen Gallery, New York City, December, 1968.

B. Historical Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

Darwin Martin appears to have met Frank Lloyd Wright in Oak Park, Illinois, in 1903. Martin and his brother, W. E. Martin, were out driving and passed Wright's studio. They were intrigued by its appearance and stopped to call on the owner. That same afternoon Wright received a commission for a house from W. E. Martin, 636 North East Avenue, Oak Park. In the following year, Wright received the commission for the Darwin D. Martin house and for the Larkin Building (demolished in 1950). The Larkin Company was a mail-order business which employed Martin. Other associates in the company also had Wright houses constructed in Buffalo, namely, W. R. Heath, 1905, and Walter V. Davidson, 1908. Mrs. W. R. Heath was the sister of Elbert Hubbard, who at one time was also associated with the Larkin Company. Hubbard is better known for his craft workshop, the Roycroft, which he established in East Aurora, New York--a small community approximately twenty miles east of Buffalo. Wright also designed Martin's summer house, "Graycliff," in the mid 1920s. The ink drawings on sized linen are dated in pencil, August 19, 1929. However, Hitchcock, in In the Nature of Materials, states that the house in Derby, located on the shore of Lake Erie, was begun in 1927, but designed a year or two earlier, and that the garage was begun in 1926. In addition to the above set of plans, the Frank Lloyd Wright Collection of the University Archives also contains a blueprint of the garage beams and columns by Jones Iron Works dated April 8, 1929. According to Hitchcock, neither construction was supervised by Wright.



Martin assisted Wright in Controlling the sale of the Wasmuth edition in the United States. Wright, through the early years, 1910-1923, had many financial problems. Martin was one of the clients who helped Wright to incorporate himself in order to pay his many debts.

In 1927, Martin established the Martin Professorship in Mathematics at the University of Buffalo, now the State University of New York at Buffalo. Each year, a \$10,000 grant was awarded to a distinguished member of the faculty. The Depression forced Martin to interrupt his support of the chair.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views: Interior and exterior photographs were published in Frank Lloyd Wright, Ausgeführte Bauten, Berlin, 1911. The Frank Lloyd Wright Collection, University Archives, State University of New York at Buffalo, contains several photographs taken during construction. An undated photograph of the living room fireplace mosaic is listed in the catalog. (See entry 9.)

2. Bibliography:

- a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Interview with Mrs. Robert Ketter, wife of the President of the University, August 23, 1973.

University Archives, Frank Lloyd Wright Collection.  
Interviews with Dorothy Martin Foster.

Four notebooks, including one of clippings and a catalog of items in the Martin House as of June, 1970.

- b. Secondary and published sources:

Architectural Record, March, 1908.

Brooks, H. Allen. "Frank Lloyd Wright and the Wasmuth Drawings." The Art Bulletin, June, 1966, pp. 193-202.

\_\_\_\_\_. The Prairie School. Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1972.

Buffalo Courier Express. May 18, 1952.

Buffalo Evening News. July 2, 1952.



Eaton, Leonard K. Two Chicago Architects and Their Clients. Cambridge, Mass.: The M. I. T. Press, 1969.

Hitchcock, Henry-Russell. In the Nature of Materials. The Buildings of Frank Lloyd Wright, 1887-1941. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, Inc., 1942.

Huxtable, Ada Louise. "An Exercise in Chinese Irony." The New York Times. December 1, 1968.

Illustrated Buffalo Express. 1904.

Kalec, Donald. "The Prairie School Furniture." The Prairie School Review, Vol. 1, No. 4, 1964, pp. 5-21.

Manson, Grant C. Frank Lloyd Wright to 1910: The First Golden Age. New York: Reinhold Publishing Co., 1958.

"Notes on Wright Buildings in Buffalo." Albright Art Gallery. Gallery Notes, June, 1947, pp. 19-22.

Scully, Vincent, Jr. Frank Lloyd Wright. New York: George Braziller, Inc., 1960.

The Larkin Idea. Buffalo, 1901.

Wright, Frank Lloyd. An Autobiography. New York: Duell, Sloan & Pearce, Inc., 1943.

\_\_\_\_\_. Ausgeführte Bauten. Berlin: Ernst Wasmuth, 1911.

\_\_\_\_\_. Modern Architecture. The Kahn Lectures for 1930. Princeton, N. J.: Princeton University Press, 1931.

\_\_\_\_\_. Frank Lloyd Wright: Writings and Buildings. Edited by Edgar Kaufmann and Ben Raeburn. Meridian Books. Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1960.

c. Likely sources not yet investigated:

Contract Letterbook, O. S. Lang.

Letters of Darwin D. Martin.



PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This enlarged version of the Prairie house illustrates Wright's early concept of living space.

"The main motives and indications were:

First- To reduce the number of necessary parts of the house and the separate rooms to a minimum, and make all come together as enclosed space--so divided that light, air and vista permeated the whole with a sense of unity.

Second- To associate the building as a whole with its site by extension and emphasis of the planes parallel to the ground, but keeping the floors off the best part of the site, thus leaving that better part for use in connection with the life of the house. Extended level planes were found useful in this connection.

Third- To eliminate the room as a box and the house as another by making all walls enclosing screens - the ceilings and floors and enclosing screens to flow into each other as one large enclosure of space, with minor subdivisions only.

Make all house proportions more liberally human, with less wasted space in structure, and structure more appropriate to material, and so the whole more liveable. Liberal is the best word. Extended straight lines or streamlines were useful in this.

Fourth- To get the unwholesome basement up out of the ground, entirely above it, as a low pedestal for the living portion of the home, making the foundation itself visible as a low masonry platform on which the building should stand.

Fifth- To harmonize all necessary openings to "outside" or to "inside" with good human proportions and make them occur naturally - singly or as a series in the scheme of the whole building. Usually they appeared as "light screens" instead of walls, because all the "architecture"



of the house was chiefly the way these openings came in such walls as were grouped about the rooms as enclosing screens. The room as such was now the essential architectural expression, and there were to be no holes cut in walls as holes are cut in a box because this was not in keeping with the ideal of "plastic." Cutting holes was violent.

Sixth- To eliminate combinations of different materials in favor of mono-material so far as possible; to use no ornament that did not come out of the nature of materials to make the whole building clearer and more expressive as a place to live in, and give the conception of the building appropriate revealing emphasis. Geometrical or straight lines were natural to the machinery at work in the building trades then, so the interiors took on this character naturally.

Seventh- To incorporate all heating, lighting, plumbing so that these systems became constituent parts of the building itself. These service features became architectural and in this attempt the ideal of an organic architecture was at work.

Eighth- To incorporate as organic architecture--so far as possible--furnishings, making them all one with the building and designing them in simple terms for machine work. Again straight lines and rectilinear forms.

Ninth- Eliminate the decorator. He was all curves and all efflorescence, if not all 'period.'

(Taken from Frank Lloyd Wright: Writings and Buildings, pp. 45-47.)

2. Condition of fabric: Good. However, the roof ridges noticeably drop away from the large chimney openings.

B. Description of Exterior:

1. Over-all dimensions: The two-story house, 150 feet by 72 feet, has an open plan in the shape of a Latin cross.
2. Foundations: A projecting stone water table is set out over the stone foundation walls.
3. Wall construction: The pale, orange-brown Roman brick, with raked horizontal mortar joints and vertical ground joints, is backed by common brick. All wooden trim is painted turquoise green. Stone string courses serve as window sills and lintels. All exterior corners are marked by paired brick piers set at right angles.



4. Structural system: A system of brick piers supports floors of reinforced concrete.
5. Porches, stoops, and bulkheads: The driveway passes beneath a projecting, open porte-cochere which is located to the west and acts as an extension of the south facade. An elevated, open porch to the east has a large, low hipped roof. Access to the porch is provided by two sets of concrete steps located to the north and south, immediately adjacent to the exterior house wall. All entrances are approached by walkways and concrete steps. All walkways are contained beneath the overhanging eaves.
6. Chimneys: Two low, large, rectangular brick chimneys have simple stone caps.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: The main entrance, located in the center of the south facade, has a low, six-foot-four-inch opening framed with a simple painted molding. It contains an oak door with a large glass panel, flanked by narrow sidelights. There is an entrance approach to the kitchen from the northwest corner of the house. French doors open to the east porch from the living room. Originally a door from the entrance hall opened to the pergola. A single-leaf oak door with a large glass panel is located in the entrance hall on the west side of its northern end. Access from the porte-cochere is provided into the large southwest room of the house. An exterior basement entrance located at the southern intersection of the east porch and living or unit room was constructed in the late 1950s to provide access to an office in the playroom.
  - b. Windows and shutters: The living-room, the dining-room, and the library have large picture windows flanked by narrow, stained-glass casement windows. Other single casement windows on the first floor, south facade, are arranged in a continuous band. All second-floor windows of varying widths are arranged in groups or bands with painted stone mullions. Originally all banded casement and stationary windows throughout the house were filled with stained glass in various patterns based on a geometric abstraction of a sheaf of wheat. During this early period, fabrication of glass doors and windows was usually done for Wright by glassmaker Orlando Giannini.



8. Roof: The low hipped roofs set on steel frames have deep overhanging eaves with stucco soffits. Double gutters have been replaced by conventional half-round gutters. The original roof covering of red clay tiles set on wood sheathing has been replaced with asphalt shingles. Two stone birdhouses designed by Wright, capped the piers flanking the entrance to the pergola. These are now part of the collection of the Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, and are on display as landscape sculpture.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plan: As with most of Wright's Prairie houses, the plan is open, yet brick piers screen openings and direct the traffic flow. Therefore, from the narrow, enclosed space of the vestibule, one turns to the right to see the large, flowing indoor-outdoor space of the living or unit room with its opening to the east porch and the library to the south. The entrance hall contains the stairway to the second floor and a fireplace on the east wall. The access between the kitchen and the dining room crosses the hall just south of the entrance to the pergola. Originally this entrance opened to a dominant axis which continued approximately 150 feet to the northern end of the pergola. To the left of the entrance hall or vestibule, the large, southwest or reception room opens to a small study and a rear hallway leading to the kitchen. The second floor has a similar arrangement along the east-west axis. The basement has a large room--originally a playroom for the two Martin children--located under the library. All service areas and storage spaces are contained under the west wing.
2. Stairways: The main stairway to the second floor is located in the entrance hall. The stairwell is open, with a low slatted wall acting as a balustrade for the second-floor hall. An enclosed stairwell located to the west of the kitchen extends from the basement to the second floor.
3. Flooring: The first-floor public rooms have gold-glazed mosaic-tile floors. The area just inside the east porch has a terra-cotta glazed-tile floor. All tiles are laid on reinforced concrete slabs. Portions of the reinforced-concrete second floor are covered with cork tiles.
4. Wall and ceiling finish: All ceilings in the public spaces are plaster with dropped oak soffits. Originally the southwestern room had a coved ceiling with applied wooden strips. All ceilings are seven-and-one-half feet in height. An original skylight is located in the



ceiling of the sitting area adjacent to the east porch. A skylight was placed in the main stairway during renovation. All walls are plaster. The woodwork in the master bedroom is mahogany. The remainder of the undecorated trim throughout the house is fumed or comb-grained oak.

5. Doorways and doors: No interior doors were present when the house was purchased in the early 1950s. All doorways and windows have natural-finished, flat, fumed-oak framing.
6. Special decorative features: The large double fireplace between the living room and entrance hall has been drastically altered. The living-room hearth has been raised, and the wisteria mosaic of the mantel wall has been removed. In the southwest reception room, the dominant fireplace wall of Roman brick has a large segmental opening framed by narrow, elongated voussoirs. All horizontal mortar joints had gold leaf applied; some still remains. Two large bronze fire boxes designed by Wright flank the slightly raised opening. There is no hearth. The dining room has a stained-glass composition of an abstract tree-of-life pattern located above the service area. This window, designed by Blanche Osterlag and installed after 1910, also faces onto the entrance hall. Osterlag also designed the wisteria mosaic.

When originally furnished, the house contained many pieces designed by Wright. It is known that nearly all of the custom furniture that went into the Prairie houses was made by the Niedecken-Walbridge Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Several pieces of furniture are contained within the University collection. The Seth Thomas case clock located on the stair landing was designed by Wright. The original dining-room furniture--ten chairs, cabinet, table, and sideboard--are now located at the Heath house (Wright, 1905), 76 Soldiers Place, Buffalo. The Wright barrel chair and two sofas with storage areas for ash-trays are part of the collection. Many bookcases were designed for the house; Wright designed a special case for the Encyclopedia Britannica. Wright purchased a series of Japanese prints for the house. He selected vases in Japan (1905) and approved the style of dishes. Other items designed by Wright for this house included a piano and bench, lighting fixtures, and the outside clothes pole.

7. Hardware: Very few pieces of the original hardware remain. Simple bronze door handles are located on the wardrobe in Mrs. Martin's bedroom. Some original casement window hardware is still in use.



8. Lighting: Some original glass globes set in bronze mountings remain. Indirect lighting above the living-room soffits and beams has been reinstalled.
9. Heating: An indirect heating system which used cast-iron radiators installed in the outer supporting piers of the major rooms was replaced in the 1950s by base-board radiators.

D. Site:

1. General setting and orientation: The house is set back about fifty feet from Jewett Parkway and from Summit Avenue. The south facade, which is parallel to Jewett Parkway, gives no indication as to the location of the main entrance. In the late 1950s, the rear north portion of the lot was developed with the construction of an apartment building. Although this residential section of Buffalo was developed at the turn of the century, the surrounding traditional houses are sited on smaller lots.
2. Historic landscape design: The Frank Lloyd Wright Collection, State University of New York at Buffalo, contains an original tracing by Wright dated February 15, 1905, showing the plan of the plantings. Some original groupings of two Ginko trees and poplars still remain. Wisteria and Pampas grass, although not in the original arrangement, are part of the present landscape. According to Wright's original concept of flower plantings, only yellow and gold blooms--autumnal colors--were to be planted in the brick-bordered terraces projecting to the south and north of the main living areas. Large, low rectangular planting urns--to be filled with lantana--are positioned at various points on the terrace, porch, and walkway walls. Two of these urns have been removed and are located at the Styvesant Hotel, Delaware Avenue, Buffalo.
3. Outbuildings: The original complex surrounding the Martin House--the garage with living quarters, washhouse, and a mushroom cellar, the conservatory, gardener's cottage, greenhouse, and the residence for Mrs. George F. Barton (Martin's sister)--located on the northeast corner of the property facing Summit Avenue, created a maze of hipped roofs set perpendicular to each other. Today only the Barton house remains. During the planning stage, Wright attempted to persuade Martin to include a swimming pool and a bowling alley. Mrs. Martin, however, deemed the playroom a sufficient allocation of space for amusements.
4. Walks: In the original plan, the only approach to the house from Jewett Parkway ran along the eastern side of



the driveway. This walk provided access to the raised entrance walkway, the porte-cochere and western entrance walkway, the rear kitchen entrance, the rear gardens, and the garage. When office space in the basement was opened to the exterior, a curving walk from nearly the southeast corner of the lot was constructed.

Prepared by Susan R. Slade  
September 1973

### PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This photo-data book was prepared as part of a 1964-65 recording project in cooperation with the Buffalo-Western New York Chapter of AIA, Olaf William Shelgren (at that time Chairman of the Chapter's Preservation Committee), and Olaf William Shelgren, Jr.--both, of the firm Shelgren, Patterson and Marzec. Photographs were taken in May, 1965, by Jack E. Boucher, HABS staff photographer. Under the direction of John C. Poppeliers, Chief, HABS, a further research and editorial project was undertaken in September, 1973, by Susan R. Slade, architectural historian.

APPENDIX  
FOLIO 3...



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